

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05  
H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01  
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AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV  
USMISSION USUN  
USIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 6167

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1  
TAGS: PGOV, SY, IS  
SUBJ: SYRIAN VIEWS ON PRIORITIES IN PEACE PROCESS AND NEXT STEPS

1. SUMMARY: PRESIDENCY OFFICIAL TOLD POLOFF SYRIANS DID NOT EXPECT TO HAVE CLEAR PICTURE OF US POLICY BEFORE YEAR-END MEANWHILE, SYRIA WILL SEEK TO COURT WORLD PUBLIC OPINION AND MOBILIZE EUROPEANS TO INFLUENCE US PERCEPTION OF ME CONFLICT. BRITISH EMBOFF SUGGESTED THAT FEELING WAS GROWING AMONG EC-9 THAT TIME FOR THEIR GREATER INVOLVEMENT IN PROMOTING ME SETTLEMENT WAS NEAR, BUT THAT BRITAIN WOULD TRY TO ASSURE THAT ANY SUCH MOVES CAME ONLY IN CLOSE CONSULTATION WITH US. SYRIAN POLITICAL COLUMNIST TOLD POLOFFS THAT IS GENEVA CONVENES SYRIA WOULD GIVE PRIORITY TO QUESTION OF WITHDRAWAL, BUT THAT SEVERAL QUESTIONS COULD BE DEALT  
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WITH SIMULTANEOUSLY. REGARDLESS OF IMMEDIATE RESULTS OF CURRENT ME CONSULTATIONS, WE EXPECT SYRIANS TO CONTINUE THEIR EFFROTS TO ISOLATE ISRAEL IN COMING MONTHS AS WELL AS US IN ME IF THEY DO NOT FEEL US LEVERAGE ON ISRAEL IS BEING EMPLOYED. END SUMMARY.

2. IN CONVERSATION POLOFF HAD SEPT 29 WITH DR. GEORGE JABBOUR,

DIRECTOR RESEARCH DIVISION, PRESIDENCY, JABBOUR SAID THAT REGARDLESS OF IMMEDIATE OUTCOME, WE WOULD NOT KNOW EFFECTS OF CURRENT ROUND OF TALKS WITH PRESIDENT CARTER UNTIL THE END OF THE YEAR. THIS IS TIME FRAME SYRIA HAD ALLOCATED TO DETERMINE IF USG IS SERIOUS ABOUT ITS INTENTION TO PRESS FOR MIDDLE EAST PEACE. SYRIA, MEANWHILE WILL SEEK TO ENGAGE INTERNATIONAL OPINION THROUGH UNGA ON BEHALF OF ARAB CAUSE. FIRST SHOT IN THIS CAMPAIGN WAS EGYPTIAN DRAFT RESOLUTION ON ISRAELI ACTIVITIES IN WEST BANK. JABBOUR SAID THIS "MODERATE" DRAFT HAD APPROVAL, THOUGH NOT FULL APPROVAL, OF ALL ARAB STATES. COMMENTING ON FAHMY SPEECH BEFORE UN, JABBOUR SAID THAT FAHMY'S REMARKS ON ISRAELI IMMIGRATION CONSTITUTE A MESSAGE TO THE SOVIET UNION.

3. JABBOUR SAID SYRIA IS LOOKING TO WESTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES TO EXERT INFLUENCE ON USG. HE ADDED THAT HE HAD JUST RETURNED FROM A CONFERENCE WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF VARIOUS EUROPEAN GOVERNMENTS WHERE THIS SUBJECT WAS DISCUSSED. THERE ARE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE EUROPEANS ON HOW TO PROCEED, BUT ALL AGREE THEY CAN AND SHOULD PLAY POSITIVE ROLE IN COMING MONTHS.

3. BRITISH EMBOFF SEPT 27 SAID VARIOUS EUROPEAN COUNTRIES FELT TIME WAS RIGHT FOR LARGER EUROPEAN ROLE IN PEACE PROCESS. HE ADDED THAT UK DID NOT AGREE WITH IDEAS OF HOW TO PROCEED HELD BY SOME OF EEC COUNTRIES BUT ADDED THERE MAY BE USEFUL  
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ROLE FOR EUROPEANS IF EFFORTS ARE PURSUED IN FULL CONSULTATION WITH USG.

4. DURING VISIT POLOKFS MADE TO OFFICES TO TISHRIIN EDITOR DR. GHASSAN AL-RIFAI AND SENIOR POLITICAL COLUMNIST GIBRAN KURIYYA SEPT 29, QUESTION RAISED CONCERNING WHAT SYRIA'S PRIORITIES WOULD BE AT GENEVA FOR ISSUES TO BE NEGOTIATED BETWEEN ARABS AND ISRAEL. RIFAI, WHO OTHERWISE TOTALLY DOMINATED CONVERSATION, DEFERRED TO KURIYYA WHOM HE SAID WAS PAPER'S POLITICAL AFFAIRS EXPERT.

5. KURIYYA UNHESITATINGLY STATED THAT QUESTION OF ISRAEL'S WITHDRAWAL FROM OCCUPIED TERRITORIES ON ALL FRONTS WOULD BE OVERRIDING SYRIAN CONCERN AND TAKE PRECEDENCE OVER QUESTIONS OF FINAL BORDERS AND PALESTINIAN RIGHTS. KURIYYA ASID, HOWEVER, THAT SEVERAL SUBJECTS COULD BE DISCUSSED IN TANDEM. HE ADDED THAT THIS WAS THE THRUST OF HIS EDITORIAL PUBLISHED SEPT 29. KURIYYA, IN ANSWER TO QUESTION ABOUT TISHRIIN'S LATITUDE IN EDITORIAL POLICY IN COMPARISON WITH BAATH AND THAWRA, WHICH ARE TIED TO PARTY AND GOVERNMENT RESPECTIVELY, INDICATED THAT IN REALITY TISHRIIN'S COLUMNISTS

OPERATED UNDER NEAR IDENTICAL CONSTRAINTS. HE STATED THAT "NOTHING WE PRINT IN THE EDITORIAL SECTION RUNS COUNTER TO OFFICIAL POLICY." HE SAID THAT HE IS IN REGULAR CONTACT WITH VARIOUS OFFICIALS ABOUT HIS EDITORIALS INCLUDING THOSE IN THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND THE PRESIDENCY, AMONG OTHERS.

6. SYRIANS, BOTH OFFICIAL AND PRIVATE, WHO FOLLOW UPS AND DOWN OF PEACE PROCESS SEEM MORE ANXIOUS TO AN FOR SOME TIME ABOUT US RESOLVE TO ACHIEVE ME PEACE. NOT CONTENT MERELY TO WATCH AND WAIT, SARG ATTEMPTION TO MOBILIZE INTERNATIONAL AND EUROPEAN OPINION AS MEANS TO OFFSET WHAT THEY PERCEIVE AS ISRAELI INFLUENCE ON INTERNAL US POLITICS. SIMULTANEOUSLY, SYRIA TRYING TO CONTAIN INTER-ARAB DIFFERENCES AND  
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PRESENT COMMON ARAB FRONT TO THE WORLD. WE EXPECT SYRIAN DIPLOMACY TO BE QUITE ACTIVE IN COMING MONTHS IN NEW BID TO WIN INTERNATIONAL AND PARTICULARLY EUROPEAN SUPPORT TO FURTHER ISOLATE ISRAEL AS WELL AS US IF IT DOES NOT EXERT WHAT SYRIANS FEEL IS ITS GREAT LEVERAGE ON ISRAEL TO ACCOMMODATE PLO AT GENEVA AND ALTER ISRAELI POLICIES TOWARD THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES.

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